

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-09

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

INFO USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 085870

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE

REFS: A. STATE 043531 B. TUNIS 1500 C. TUNIS 1832

1. DEPARTMENT AND DOD APPRECIATE EMBASSY ASSESSMENT REF C AND AGREE THAT SECURITY ASSISTANCE LIKELY TO BE A CENTRAL ELEMENT IN PROMOTING PRODUCTIVE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS BY DEMONSTRATING CONSTANCY AND OVERALL CONCERN FOR TUNISIA AFTER DEMISE OF BOURGUIBA. WE SEE PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, IN ATTEMPTING, TO ADJUST LEVEL OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO ACCORD IN SUBSTANTIAL DEGREE TO GOT'S PERCEPTIONS OF REQUIREMENTS AS LISTED IN REF B AND SEE CONTINUED NEED FOR AN ATTEMPT TO SCALE DOWN TUNISIAN EXPECTATIONS OF U.S. ASSISTANCE. APPARENT GOT CONFIDENCE THAT IT WILL NOT NEED USG FINANCING FOR PURCHASE OF NEW AIRCRAFT IS ENCOURAGING AND WE CONTINUE TO HOPE THAT GOT
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WILL NOT OVERLOOK POSSIBLE PETRODOLLAR FINANCING.

2. AS NOTED REF A, WE PREPARED TO CONSIDER CASH SALE OF TYPES OF ARMS IDENTIFIED IN GOT'S ORIGINAL REQUEST, WITH

EXCEPTIONS PURSUANT TO WORLDWIDE ARM; POLICY, E.G.,
REDEYE (PRIMARILY TO PRECLUDE RISK OF IT FALLING INTO

TERRORIST HANDS). AS EXPLAINED TO CHUSLOT DURING
WASHINGTON CONSULTATIONS, WE WOULD ALSO GREATLY PREFER
DEFLECT GOT INTEREST IN HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED AND COSTLY
ITEMS, E.G., HAWK, PARTICULARLY WHEN LESS EXPENSIVE AND
LESS TECHNICALLY DIFFICULT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE, E.G.,
CHAPARRAL PLUS VULCAN (HAWK NOT PREVIOUSLY SOLD TO
AFRICAN COUNTRIES FOR THESE REASONS). ALTHOUGH
LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS ON SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT
APPLY ONLY TO GRANT OR CREDIT, GROWING CONGRESSIONAL
CRITICISM AND NEW STATUTORY OVERSIGHT OF CASE SALES
OVER \$25 MILLION UNDERSCORE NEED TO AVOID CONTROVERSIAL
ITEMS TO GREATEST EXTENT PRACTICABLE.

3. POSSIBLE USE FMS CREDIT POSES MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS.

A. \$40 MILLION AFRICA CEILING. FY 75 LEGISLATION PERMITS
PRESIDENTIAL WAIVER OF AFRICA CEILING, WHICH WE ARE
REQUESTING. ALTHOUGH WE INTEND TO SEEK RELIEF FROM
CEILING IN FY 76 LEGISLATION AND INCREASE IN NECESSARY
FUNDING, AT THIS POINT WE CANNOT BE ASSURED THAT A
SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN FMS CREDIT FOR TUNISIA POSSIBLE.
FYI ONLY: WE TENTATIVELY PLANNING, SUBJECT TO AVAILABLE
FUNDS AND RELIEF FROM CEILING, ON \$15 MILLION CREDIT
ANNUALLY BEGINNING IN FY 76. EVEN AT THIS LEVEL,
SIGNIFICANT GAP REMAINS BETWEEN GOT ASPIRATIONS AND
FUNDING REALITIES, WHICH LIKELY PRECLUDE SERIOUS
CONSIDERATION OF EXPENSIVE WEAPONS SYSTEM UNLESS
TUNISIANS CAN OBTAIN FINANCING FROM THIRD PARTIES. END
FYI.

B. SOPHISTICATED WEAPON RESTRICTION. CONGRESS STILL
PRECLUDES USE OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE FUNDS (GRANT OR
CREDIT) FOR PROVISION OF SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEM,
E.G., JET AIRCRAFT AND MISSILES, TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
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UNLESS DETERMINED BY PRESIDENT TO BE IMPORTANT TO U.S.
NATIONAL SECURITY INTEREST. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, PREFER
AVOID RECOMMENDING THAT PRESIDENT MAKE SUCH FINDING
EXCEPT WHEN WARRANTED BY VERY STRONG U.S. NATIONAL
SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS.

4. IN EFFORT AVOID A PROBABLE CONFLICT BETWEEN GOT
ASPIRATIONS AND USG FISCAL AND POLICY CONSTRAINTS, WE
BELIEVE EMBASSY/USLOT SHOULD ATTEMPT TO DEFLECT GOT
INTEREST IN PURCHASING HAWK OR REDEYE AND IN OBTAINING
MISSILE SYSTEMS UNDER FMS CREDIT. IF NECESSARY YOU
COULD FRANKLY EXPLAIN U.S. LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS AND
ADVANTAGE (IN OBTAINING FUNDS FROM CONGRESS) OF USING

POSSIBLE FMS CREDIT FOR UNCONTROVERSIAL ITEMS SUCH AS
RADAR, VEHICLES, AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT. KISSINGER

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